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ABSTRACT

Higher education in Bahrain and background information on this Arab Gulf country are considered. Bahrain, similar to other Gulf States, depended heavily on expatriates as teachers, most of whom were from Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. Bahraini students have pursued college studies in other countries. Higher education in the country started as separate colleges based on needs. In 1983 there were four higher education institutions. By 1970 Bahrain established the Gulf College of Technology, which was the only college in the region to focus on technology and accept students from other Arab Gulf States. By 1976 Bahrain established the College of Health Sciences and Hotel and Catering Training Center. In 1978 The University College of Bahrain was established. The Polytechnic College and The University College of Bahrain served as the nucleus of the present University of Bahrain, while the College of Health Sciences became the first college of a newer regional university, the Arabian Gulf University (AGU). The establishment of AGU with funds from seven countries will provide for needed studies in certain areas. Graduate studies are still sought outside Bahrain. A proposed undergraduate special education program is described. (SW)

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CURRENT REFORM IN HIGHER EDUCATION
IN BAHRAIN

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Introduction

Interest in studying the Gulf* area was not a priority among American scholars. With the 1973 oil crisis interest began to develop. Such interest, however, was mainly in the area of economics and most of the studies were concerned with Saudi Arabia as the major producer of oil in that part of the world. Bahrain as one of the countries in the Gulf area did not receive much attention. Examining the doctoral dissertations written in the U.S. about the Arab World (Selim, 1976 & 1983) there were four dissertations that dealt with education in Bahrain and two others with its history. The four dissertations were written by Bahraini students at U.S. universities. Within the past ten years most of the works were either done or published in England (Al-Tameemi (1977), Al-Kuwari (1978), Niblock (1980), Al-Misnad (1985).

Background

Bahrain is an independent state composed of several islands in the Gulf. The combined area is 258 square miles. The largest is 30 miles long and 8 to 15 miles in width (depends upon the shape of the island) and its name is Bahrain. According to the 1981 census the population is 350,798. Out of that number 80% are of Arab ethnicity and 20% Iranian. However, 40-45% are Sunnies and 55-60% Shi'ites.** The main natural resources are oil and natural gas. In 1982 Bahrain produced 16,067,000 barrels of oil and 3,696 million cubic meters of natural gas (The Middle East and North Africa, 1985). Commerce and banking form the backbone and the most important source of income. In 1981 there were 19 full commercial banks; 65

*This area is known to the West as the Persian Gulf and to the Arab States as the Arabian Gulf. In this paper the term "Gulf area" will be used.

**Shi'ites form a sect in Islam. The common misunderstanding in the U.S. is that Shi'ites are only Iranians. There are many Arab Shi'ites.

offshore banking units; 9 individual banks; 6 brokers and 46 representative offices of international companies (Ministry of Information, June 1981).

Historical Significance

The importance of Bahrain is due to its location. It is the link between north; south and east; west of the Gulf. The first colonial country that paid attention to the strategic location of Bahrain was Portugal which occupied it from 1521 - 1602 and it was called Delmun (sometimes spelled Delmon). Then Iran occupied it from 1602 - 1782 and was expelled in 1783 by the Utah tribe from Arabia. The leading family at that time was Al-Khalifa. It is interesting to note that the Al-Khalifa family and its descendents have been the rulers of Bahrain since that time, i.e., for the past two hundred years the rulers came from the same family. In the 19th century Britain was concerned with its empire and did its best to prevent the French, the Germans and the Russians from penetrating that area and threaten Britain's interests in India (Middle East and North Africa, 1983). Bahrain became a British protectorate in 1820. With the nationalization of the Suez Canal in Egypt in 1956, many disturbances in Bahrain against England began to develop. In 1970 independence was voted in with the presence of UN observers and in August 1971 full independence was proclaimed (al Rumaihi, 1977).

Media in Bahrain

As of 1983, Bahrain enjoyed four daily newspapers, 10 weekly papers, three monthly/quarterly magazines, two radio stations, and one TV station.

Public Education

As of 1982 there were 54,102 students in the elementary schools, 9,122 in the intermediate (J.H.) schools, 5,102 in the secondary schools (academic and business), 1,306 in trade schools and 102 in eight classes for religious instruction. It should be noted that all these are governmental schools. There are some other private schools where sons and daughters of diplomats and expatriates working in Bahrain send their children. The system of public schools is a 6 - 3 - 3 system.

In 1983 there were four institutions for higher education: The College of Science, Arts and Education; The Gulf Polytechnic; The College of Health Sciences; and Hotel and Catering Training Center (The Middle East and North Africa, 1983).

Traditional and Modern Education

Traditionally, every village had a kuttāb (usually a one-room religious school or instruction to be held in the back of a shop). It was the main source of education where students received instruction in the basics of Islamic religion and the memorization of parts or whole of the Quran (the holy book for Islam). This was not compulsory education. It was left to the discretion of parents. In larger towns and wherever rich people dwelt there was the 'advanced' kuttāb. Usually, it was privately funded and the students were taught reading and writing of Arabic language and rudiments of arithmetic. Under the age of ten, the kuttāb admitted boys and girls together (Al-Misnad, 1985). Bahrain was no exception to that system known

to all countries in the area. It was 1889 when the first western-style school was established by a group of missionaries known as the Arabian Mission (an independent American Protestant group) and later in 1934 was adopted by the Reformed Church in America. The school started teaching Bible, English language, Arabic grammar and geography. Girls were given instruction in sewing and embroidery (Al-Misnad, p.31).

The era of modern education started in the 1920's in Bahrain and was well established in the 1930's. Details about the beginnings of modern education in Bahrain are found in Al-Rumaihi (1978). Bahrain was the first State in the Gulf area to introduce modern education at the elementary and secondary school levels.*

The Beginning of Higher Education

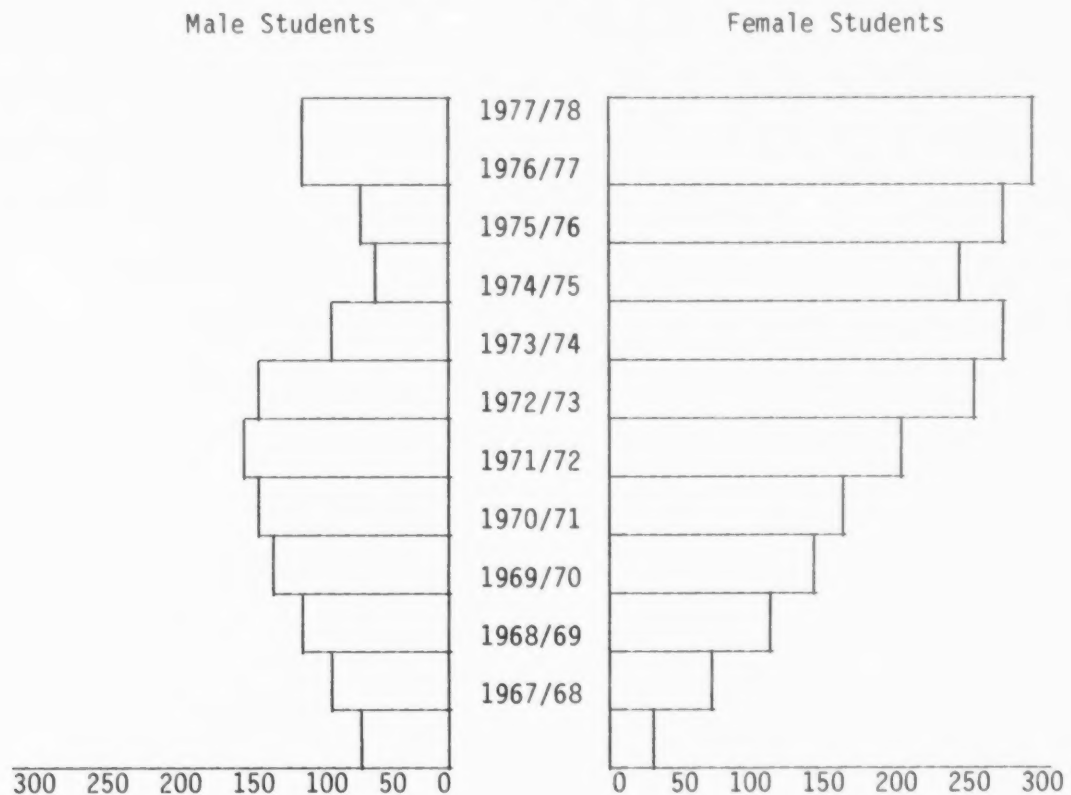
Bahrain, similar to other Gulf States, depended heavily upon expatriates as teachers. Most teachers came from Egypt, Syria and Lebanon. The first effort in preparing indigenous teachers was not at a college level, rather students who completed their intermediate level (J.H.) were given the secondary school subjects plus few courses related to education. Even with that modest effort, it did not come to existence except in the 1940's. The teacher was qualified to teach up to the level of fourth grade.

Concerned with the growing number of expatriate teachers due to the growing demand for education, Bahrain invited consultants to study the

*For those interested in modern education and the education of females, they are referred to #3 and #8 in the bibliography.

situation. Recommendations were made in 1965 to close the program mentioned above for preparing teachers and to start another program for two years beyond the secondary school (S.H.) level. This system lasted from 1966 through 1978 when the University College of Bahrain opened its doors and took over the responsibility of preparing teachers.

Figure 1
Male and Female Enrollment at Teacher Training Colleges in Bahrain
1966/1967 - 1977/1978



Source: Al-Mishad (1985) p. 184

Figure 1 shows that 1972-1973 was the peak year for male students with no more than 150, then dropped in the next five years. Female students showed

steady increase up to 300 in 1977/1978 with the exception of 1975/1976 when there was a small drop. There is no given explanation to these two phenomena neither from the Ministry of Education nor from Al-Misnad.

THE BEGINNING OF HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM

By 1970 Bahrain established the Gulf College of Technology. It was the only college in the region to focus on technology and accept students not only from Bahrain, but also from other Arab States in the Gulf area. Unfortunately, records are not available to show how many students were accepted at that time and how numbers of students developed throughout the years, but the change came to the name and the name and the college became The Gulf Polytechnic. In a recent publication the number of students reached 2,097 (The World of Learning, 1986). In spite of the success as a regional college, other Arab States began to think of establishing their universities. They started seeking the help of UNESCO.

Although all consultative committees and UNESCO experts on these university projects repeatedly warned these governments about the wastefulness of their ambitious national projects on the grounds of the small size of their indigenous population, these governments kept pressing their requests by changing their tactics. In this manner, in almost every request made by each of these governments, it was clearly emphasized that the establishment of the proposed university was not for national students only, but was interested to serve the whole Gulf area. (Al-Misnad, p. 201)

Each state justified building of an indigenous university not only on the grounds of serving the whole Gulf area but also because each state sent its students abroad to study in Egypt, Lebanon, Europe or the U.S.

The boost in oil prices of 1973 encouraged each State to develop its own university. Bahrain, however, did not choose that route. Rather it

developed separate colleges as needed. By 1976 Bahrain established the College of Health Sciences and Hotel and Catering Training Center. However, the landmark was 1978 when The University College of Bahrain was established. The Polytechnic College and The University College of Bahrain served as the nucleus of the present University of Bahrain*, while the College of Health Sciences became the first college of a newer regional university, i.e., the Arabian Gulf University. The number of students at the University College is 1,200. (The World of Learning, 1986)

The University College of Bahrain

For one reason or another the government of Bahrain did not entertain the motion of establishing higher education except in the late 1960's. The government sought the advice of UNESCO then the United Nations Development Program Agency (UNDP). At last there was a signed agreement between the government and UNESCO to establish the University College of Bahrain to include: liberal arts, science and education. It opened its doors in 1978/1979. An interesting point is that comparing this college with other universities in the region, i.e., Kuwait and Qatar, the Bahraini student had to pay 720 Bahraini Dinars (\$2,628) per year while Kuwait charged a nominal fee of five (5) Kuwaiti Dinars (about \$25) and Qatar not only provided free education but also gave monthly stipends to the students (Al-Misnad, p. 252). The college was followed by other colleges and they became the University of Bahrain*. It should be noted that it is a "co-ed" university.

"The University of Bahrain" was used in a personal correspondence in December 1986 by one of the Professors at The University College of Bahrain.

Bahrain and Higher Education Abroad

Whether one would consider 1903 the beginning of education abroad when a teacher from Bahrain went to the U.S. for further studies (Winder, 1959) or when the Bahraini government sent a student in 1913 to Egypt for higher education (Al-Misnad, 1985), the point is that Bahrain by the turn of the twentieth century began its contacts with other countries for higher education for its students. Between 1946/1947 and 1955/1956 the number of students studying abroad fluctuated between 10 and 18 students. From 1956 to 1971 records are poor and numbers of students studying abroad are not clear. In fact some other years are also unclear and the numbers are not available, namely, 1975 - 1977. In 1976/1977 a law was passed mandating the Ministry of Education to keep records of all Bahraini students studying abroad. Therefore, a more organized information became available starting 1977. This, however, doesn't mean that careful analysis is done, but one may say that it is improving.

Table I

Number of Students at Universities Outside Bahrain

Year	Number of Male Students	Number of Female Students	TOTAL
1977/1978	1,613	1,099	2,712
1978/1979	1,673	1,159	2,832
1979/1980	1,746	1,167	2,913

Source: Ministry of Education, Bahrain. Educational Statistics 1971/1972-1979/1980.

Table II

Number of Bahraini Students (Males & Females) on Government Scholarships
Scholarships from Other Countries or Privately Funded at Universities Abroad (1979/1980)

Hosting Country	Scholarships from Bahraini Government			Scholarships from hosting Government			Privately Funded			TOTAL		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Egypt	157	189	346	-	-	-	103	110	213	260	299	559
Kuwait	-	-	-	41	46	87	115	171	286	156	217	373
Saudi Arabia	-	-	-	198	39	237	20	1	21	218	40	258
Iraq	3	3	6	19	28	47	74	71	145	96	102	198
Qatar	-	-	-	108	195	303	-	7	7	108	202	310
United Arab Emirates	-	-	-	17	28	45	-	-	-	17	28	45
Other Arab Countries	-	2	2	5	11	16	55	48	103	60	61	121
Sub Total	160	194	354	388	347	735	367	408	775	915	949	1864
U.K.	70	2	72	-	-	-	261	36	297	331	38	369
U.S.A.	8	18	26	-	-	-	143	57	200	151	75	226
Canada	54	47	101	-	-	-	41	27	68	95	74	169
India	-	-	-	2	1	3	226	23	249	228	24	252
Other Non-Arab Countries	3	-	3	14	5	19	9	2	11	26	7	33
Sub Total	135	67	202	16	6	22	680	145	825	831	218	1049
Grand Total	295	261	556	404	353	757	1047	553	1600	1746	1167	2913

Source: Ministry of Education, Bahrain

Table III

Students Studying Abroad by Discipline 1979/1980

Liberal Arts		Business		Fine Arts Home Economics Physical Ed.		Mathematics & Science		Engineering		Medicine		Other	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
334	401	391	194	57	102	216	211	490	118	114	89	144	52

TOTAL 2913

The question that could not be answered is: How many of the 2,712 students (1977/1978) returned to Bahrain and how many were included in the 1979/1980 count? Because of such lack of information, tables II and III will state only the 1979/1980 numbers.* Would such numbers justify the establishment of a university? In order to answer this question, one should examine factors other than numbers. Table II indicates that there are three types of students studying outside Bahrain: The first, those who receive scholarships from other governments or schools outside Bahrain. The third, those who could afford to pursue their studies with private funds (whether their's or their employers).

Further examination of the numbers show that the third type forms a higher number than the first two combined. This leads to some speculations: the first, Bahrainis value education and are ready to sacrifice of their incomes for higher education. The second, having a higher degree provides the holder with a high paying job. Thirdly, the revenue of oil prices and higher payment for jobs related to oil production allowed people to afford sending their sons and daughters to other countries for further studies. Meanwhile, there are those students who are not outstanding to receive scholarships and not wealthy enough to afford further studies on their own accounts.

If one would look at the issue from a political point of view, there is a concern that the students who study outside Bahrain are exposed to

*Numbers for the years 1980 - 1985 were not available and complete. Therefore, the reader will find sporadic numbers from those years. These form available numbers from various sources.

political systems different from that of their country "which make them critical of the social and political status quo of their own" society (Al-Misnad, p. 243F)

For one reason or more of those mentioned above, the Bahraini government became in favor of establishing indigenous programs for higher education rather than relying upon sending its students to other countries.

THE ARABIAN GULF UNIVERSITY

In March 1980 the Fifth Conference of Ministers of Education of the Arab Gulf States was held in Kuwait. The participating seven states, i.e., Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and Oman signed an agreement to provide necessary funds for establishing the Arabian Gulf University (AGU) to be located in Bahrain (Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States, 1980). The percentages of funds were as follow:

Kuwait	25%
Iraq	25%
United Arab Emirates	21%
Qatar	9%
Oman	2.5%
Bahrain	1.5%

Why should Arab States form such a university to be founded in Bahrain?

There are several dimensions that led to such a move. Briefly, they are:

1. Political. Iran has been eying Bahrain as its territory since it was expelled more than two hundred years ago. With the rise of the present regime of Khomeini, that desire intensified. The Arab countries in the Gulf area wanted to show their support to a sister state. Consequently, they chose Bahrain to be the selected site for the new university. Further support was shown by Saudi Arabia when it funded building a

bridge between its eastern shore and Bahrain's west coast. The bridge was opened in December 1986. This will lead to stronger ties with Bahrain. Now it is possible to go from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and even Kuwait by land rather than by plane as it used to be.

2. Economical. As mentioned before, Bahrain doesn't have the enormous revenues of oil production similar to those of the neighboring states. The founding of a university will provide some financial help (building, salaries,...). Travel by students from the other states and some of their families will provide for more money through tourism. More local people will be employed. Expatriates will be looking for housing,...
3. Educational. Contrary to what has been written or said, AGU is NOT another university in the region similar to other universities in the other states. It is a university to provide for programs that are not available in the region. For example, the writer of this paper was charged to develop a school of education to prepare teachers for special education in its various fields. Two levels were suggested and approved: one for the undergraduate program for five (5) years; and the other as a graduate program. Due to the circumstances, however, the recommendation to the Board of Trustees* was to start with the

*Two representatives from each of the seven participating countries form the Board of Trustees. The Board meets twice a year: in April and in October. It works under the guidelines drawn by the Ministers of Education of those countries.

graduate programs because of the great need for teachers of special education.** Another program is the study of the desert and its related studies. The school of health sciences was established first as a school of medicine, but now it is branching out into other fields of studying health.

AGU PRESENT STATUS AND FUTURE PLANS

The pledge of AGU is to be a research university. The graduate program and research form 70% of the total program while the other 30% would be for the undergraduate studies. At present there are three major programs. The first is in the area of health sciences to include medicine, nursing and related areas. The school started about three years ago. The school of medicine includes both 'pre-med' and 'medical school' in one program that lasts seven years beyond the secondary school.

The second program is for the studies of the desert and arid lands. The program is a graduate program only. There are some courses to be taken as core and the rest of the time is devoted to research and writing a thesis.

The third program is designed to cover a wide spectrum of needs in the educational arena (Saif, 1985 a, 1985 b, 1986). These reports could be summarized as follows:

I. The Undergraduate Program

The suggested program is to prepare teachers of special education (for the sub-normal as well as the super-normal) as follows:

**In meetings with officials from participating countries, the need for special education teachers was considered an important issue.

1. The mentally retarded
 - 1.1 mild
 - 1.2 moderate
 - 1.3 severe
2. The physically handicapped
3. The multiply handicapped
4. The deaf
5. The blind
6. The learning disabled/slow learner
7. The emotionally/behaviorally disabled
8. Rehabilitation
9. The gifted and talented

The program is designed for five years after which the student will be a teacher of special education in the area he/she chooses.

II. The Graduate Programs

The graduate programs include:

1. Graduate studies in:
 - 1.1 special education
 - 1.2 teaching and learning
 - 1.3 educational administration
 - 1.4 educational psychology
 - 1.5 guidance & counseling
 - 1.6 continuous education
 - 1.7 gifted and talented
2. Research in:
 - 2.1 educational policy
 - 2.2 educational administration
 - 2.3 educational evaluation
 - 2.4 educational sociology
 - 2.5 continuous education
 - 2.6 teaching and learning
 - 2.7 guidance and counseling
 - 2.8 gifted and talented

There were some factors that necessitated the postponement of the undergraduate program. The most important of these are:

1. It is difficult, psychologically, to ask the supporting countries to send students for five years to be qualified as teachers for special education.

2. The drop in oil prices led some countries to hold back some funds for the university which made it more difficult to execute such an ambitious plan.
3. The difficulty to recruit professors in all these areas of special education as well as academic areas in a short time.
4. The number of students will be relatively small. Consequently the per student expenditure will be extremely high which will make the university vulnerable to criticism from the funding countries especially at this stage of starting the university.

Based upon the above, it has been recommended to develop a one-year program for students who are graduates of teachers colleges and to be given a diploma as teachers of special education. The rationale was that the student would have already studied education, psychology, methods,... Should a student qualify to pursue his/her studies, the student can secure an M.A. after successfully finishing the required courses plus a thesis.

Given that the participating countries in funding AGU may be reluctant to spare teachers for a year (due to shortage among teachers) and who may think of pursuing further studies; and given the fact that there is an excess in the number of graduates of liberal arts colleges, it was suggested that AGU may accept those with liberal arts degrees and give them an extra year of foundations in education, psychology, and statistics. These credit hours will NOT be counted towards the diploma or the M.A.

Problems Facing Such Development

1. The university policy that teaching in areas such as education should be in Arabic. In the Arab world, there are no more than a dozen that hold a Ph.D. in special education.
2. Some areas such as medicine and desert studies permit using English as language of instruction. The competency of students in English is not at the level of expectancy. Therefore, the students have to have about eight hours of English language which in turn cuts from the load of the student in other areas.
3. Faculty members are mostly expatriates. Many of them are on loan from their governments and/or universities. The maximum period is four years after which the faculty member goes back to his institution. This does not allow for the continuity of relationship between the professor and the students.
4. Some of the funding countries for the university put a condition of separating males from females. This makes it more difficult because the load for a professor will be cut into half since he will be teaching two sections of the same material. Consequently, there is need for more faculty. It should be noted that Bahraini female students at the University of Bahrain are in a co-ed university but AGU is a regional university and it must accept students from all countries in the region and some strongly oppose any system of co-education.

5. A unique problem for the university is that it is funded by seven countries. Some of them did not pay their share in time. This makes it more difficult especially for the president of the university who spends most of his time urging each funding source to pay its share on time.

SUMMARY

1. Bahraini students who did not find what they wanted to study sought higher education in other countries.
2. Higher education in Bahrain started as separate colleges based upon needs.
3. With the development of some colleges for undergraduate studies, more Bahraini students are studying at home for a B.A. or B.S.
4. The combination of colleges and the beginning of the University of Bahrain may lead to the opening of newer colleges in the future.
5. Graduate studies are still sought outside Bahrain. At this time it is difficult to predict whether or not the University of Bahrain will start a graduate program.
6. The establishment of the Arabian Gulf University (AGU) with funds from seven countries will provide for needed studies in certain areas.

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